

The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) traces its roots to 1813 when Congress passed a joint resolution which directed copies of the House and Senate Journals, and other publications, be printed and distributed to certain libraries and institutions outside of the Federal Government. Congress took this action to ensure that the American public has access to its Government's information.

From this small beginning, the FDLP has grown into a system of over 1,250 libraries of all sizes, a variety of types, and located in the 50 states and the territories of the United States. Depository libraries have supported the public's right to Federal Government information by collecting, organizing, and preserving it, and by providing assistance to library users for more than 145 years.

The FDLP is based upon these three principles:

- Federal Government information products within scope of the FDLP shall be made available to Federal depository libraries;
- Federal depository libraries shall be located in each State and U.S. Congressional District to make Government information products more widely available; and
- Federal Government information in all media shall be available for the free use by the general public.

Materials received by depository libraries on deposit from the Government Printing Office (GPO) remain the property of the U.S. Government. Libraries become the custodians of these resources; Federal property is entrusted to their care. Certain legal obligations come with being a depository library and with the stewardship of Federal property. These obligations fall into the broad categories of access, maintenance of collections, and service. Since these categories apply to almost every aspect of depository operations, the Federal Depository Library Handbook provides requirements and offers practical guidance in these broad categories.

The Handbook was devised to inform depository staff of, and to help them understand, the FDLP requirements found in Title 44, United States Code, chapter 19 and those prescribed by the GPO. Further, the Handbook provides guidance to libraries on how they can meet their FDLP obligations. Legal requirements are those found in public laws. Mandatory responsibilities are not legal requirements but those responsibilities that LSCM has identified for program compliance.

Unless otherwise stated, all depository library staff must be familiar with and conform to the legal and program requirements set forth in this Handbook. Statements containing the terms **required to**, **must**, **shall**, or **mandated**, reflect legal and program requirements and appear in bold with yellow highlight. Statements containing the words "encouraged", "may", "should", "could", or "can", are not requirements; they provide guidance and are merely suggestions.